

The NCI SBIR Program

How to Apply

Tips for submitting an application

Keys to a Strong Application

- **Significant, innovative, and focused science**
- **Significant product and/or commercial potential**
 - **A product-focused application is more likely to have support of business reviewers**
 - **A project with sound financial projections is more likely to attract a partner**
- **Translational research/clinical applications projects should involve the appropriate collaborators**
 - **Oncologists**
 - **Pathologists**
 - **Statisticians**

Know NIH Review Criteria

Significance

- Does the study address an important problem and have commercial potential?

Approach

- Are design and methods well-developed and appropriate? Are problem areas addressed?

Innovation

- Are there novel concepts or approaches? Are the aims original and innovative?

Investigator

- Is the investigator appropriately trained and capable of managing the project?

Environment

- Does the scientific environment contribute to the probability of success? Is the environment unique?

Commercialization

- Is the company's business strategy one that has a high potential for success?

Key #1

Start Application Process Early!

- Start developing your application as early as possible. You need time to develop a strong proposal.
- Seek help of experienced applicants early in process
- Assemble a strong scientific team
 - If you have a weakness or gap in expertise, fill it early

Key #2

Consider Your Company's Strengths and Weaknesses

- **Consider your company's strengths**
 - Try to exploit those strengths to address a specific NIH Program initiative
- **Consider your weaknesses too**
 - It is rare that a small company will have all the necessary expertise for a strong application
 - If you have no track record of commercialization, consider getting a partner who does
- **Partner with other companies or academics to fill gaps**
- **Contact NIH Program Director in advance to discuss your proposal and receive feedback**
- **Review similar currently funded projects in the NIH CRISP database**
(<http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/>)

Key #3

Always Consider the Reviewers

Who is going to review your application?

- 10 or more on the Review Panel who will score your application
- However, primary review by 2-4 persons with appropriate expertise assembled by SRA
- Combination of academic and business professionals

Key #3

Always Consider the Reviewers

- **What are they looking for?**
- Readable and understandable application
 - Do not assume they will know everything you know
 - You understand your application best so convey it to them

- Clear and concise language, “lay summary”
- Clear plan for Phase I, II and commercialization
- Feasible methods
- Appropriate objective tests of success for each Specific Aim
- Promising preliminary data are very influential
- Solid letters of support for commercialization

Key #3

Always Consider the Reviewers

- **Read your material critically as if you were the Reviewer**
 - What are the weaknesses?
 - Point out potential difficulties, do not hide them
 - Suggest ways to address them or provide rationale
 - Recruit an independent reader
- **Provide alternative methods if a particular approach is not successful**

Help the Reviewer write his analysis

Key #3

Always Consider the Reviewers

- **Be realistic about your goals**
 - Provide a feasible timetable for key objectives
- **Be realistic about your budget**
 - Ask Program Director for early guidance

Application Checklist

- Have you honestly assessed the commercial viability of your technology?
- Do you have a talented professional to be a PI?
- Is the PI supported by the right team? Does he or she have the time?
- Do you have the resources to write the grant application or contract proposal?
- Do you have the resources and capabilities to execute?
- Do you have the business resources needed for a successful launch?

If you aren't funded the first time...

- **Use peer review to improve your technology and presentation**
 - Reviewers often spot errors in the proposal
 - Reviewers will let you know if what you are proposing has been done before

- **If peer reviewers “didn’t get your proposal”**
 - Customers, investors, and employees may not get it either
 - Fix errors, improve your presentation
- **It’s always painful not to be funded, but at least you get the feedback**
- **Explore opportunities to serve on NIH peer review panels**
 - Exposure to grantsmanship & insight into the review process
 - Meet bright colleagues

<http://sbir.cancer.gov/>

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